

The following are official answers to questions submitted through June 22, 1999.

1. Paragraph A. Capability Statement says that this statement "should contain all the information requested below and shall apply to all companies proposed as part of any teaming arrangement." Listed below are the requirements for 10 references and descriptions of our 5 most relevant contracts. We interpret this to mean that you require 10 references and 5 project descriptions from each major teammate. Is this interpretation correct?

This is the correct interpretation.

2. Page 15 of the Project Agreement (Step 10. Proposal Requirements) allows the use of charts and graphs submitted as foldouts. Would such foldout charts be counted as one page or two?

Any foldout chart/graph which does not exceed 11" x 14" will count as one page; any foldout chart/graph larger than 11" x 14" will count as 2 pages.

3. Paragraph B. Description of Approaches specifies that "Approach descriptions shall not exceed 3 pages in length, including any flowcharts, for each of the above functions." It appears to us that there are a total of 10 separate functions within the 7 areas listed. For example, within the area called U.S. Mail Processing, three functions are specified (open/sort, RAM data capture, and file assembly). Are three pages allowed for each of these three functions?

Each requirement referenced under Description of Approaches is allowed a 3-page description. For example, under US Mail Processing requirements 3.6.1 (open/sort), 3.7.1 (RAM data capture), and 3.6.3 (US file assembly) are referenced—3 requirements for a total of 9 allowable description pages.

4. In the Description of Approaches section, no page allowance is provided for an introduction to the section. Is there a page limitation for such an introduction?

There is no page allowance provided for an introduction to the Description of Approaches section as no introduction was requested. If you choose to provide an introduction it will be included in the allowable page count based on the number of requirements referenced.

5. The definitions section did not include definitions for Quality Control and Quality Assurance. We assume that by Quality Control, you refer to those inspections and reports that are used to ensure that the contract specs are met, that work is error free and completed within prescribed timeframes, and that by Quality Assurance, you mean all processes used to ensure accurate and efficient task performance, and appropriate allocations of human and other resources. Are these definitions correct?

These definitions are correct.

6. The project agreement instructs us to use Department of Labor Wage Determination No. 94-2103, Revision 17, dated 7/9/98 to develop our cost estimate. Effective June 1, 1999 the Health & Welfare allowance was increased from the \$1.39/hr shown on this WBD to \$1.63/hr. Should we use the \$1.63 rate for the health & welfare allowance?

Offerors should follow the instructions in the Project Agreement when developing cost estimates.

7. How do you know what shoe boxes and in what room the shoe boxes are located?

The Classes Arranged Numerically (CAN) contained on the Web site contains the current information on search rooms and the contents of each.

8. Is there a central file, and who is responsible for maintaining it?

Each Technology Center has at least one central files in which application files are stored. The PTOSS contractor will be responsible for maintaining the central files (see PA section 3.5).

9. Is there a QA process for monitoring accuracy in search room filing? If so, what metrics are collected and how are they reported? Who performs QA?

Refer to PA section 3.14 and the current contracts on the Web site for information on QA.

10. How are files logged in and out of the PCT File Room (did not see PALM system there)?

All application files (national and international) are tracked via the PALM system.

11. How are mail/faxes logged in/out of the mail room? Is there a central system/data base that can be accessed to determine what was sent/received when?

Currently, paper logs are maintained to record faxes received in a Tech Center. All applications received in a Tech Center mailroom are charged in and out using the PALM system. There is no way to determine what other materials were received in a mailroom.

12. How are records controlled in the search rooms? Specifically:

- How are new records created (who has authority to create a new record, and how is the creation of a new record recorded (logged)?
- How do you know which records are in each search room?
- How are records logged in/out of the search rooms?

US and foreign patent documents and non-patent literature (NPL) are housed in the search rooms. The classification(s) assigned to each US patent are contained on the automated Master Classification File (MCF); these classification(s) determine where each patent copy is filed. There is a very limited record of the classifications assigned to foreign patents and no record of the NPL housed in the search rooms. Documents are added to the search file when new patents issue and when examiners request the addition of copies to specific classifications. There are established processes in place for adding new classification data to the MCF. See question no. 7 for information on determining what documents are housed in each search room.

13. Please explain "Article 20."

An Article 20 folder contains copies of PCT application documents filed in another country. When the original application was filed, the applicant paid a fee and indicated a potential interest in filing an application in the US. These application document copies are maintained by the PTO until an application is filed with the office (at which time they are matched up with the application file) or until the specified time period has passed.

14. Who wrote RAM software/who does maintenance on it?

RAM is a PTO maintained Office of Finance system.

15. Who maintains server room—what contractor—in scanning room?

The scanning server is maintained by the PTO's Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO).

16. Certainly there are a number of companies that can fulfill the past performance, key people, and mandatory elements. And since there is no opportunity for technical innovation/infusion, other than a price shoot-out, how does one differentiate from another?

Within this contract, there is opportunity for innovation; e.g., in structuring the work processes to meet PTO's requirements. Evaluation of offerors is discussed in PA section 9. Ground Rules for the Acquisition Process, Step 3.

17. What is the staffing for each of the activities?

The current contract is a fixed-price, requirements type contract. Therefore, PTO does not maintain staffing records for this requirement. Volume estimates for each function are provided at Attachment B.

18. What is a "blue truck?"

A blue truck is a movable shelving unit which is painted blue.

19. How many contract employees are currently staffing this effort?

See the answer to question 17, above.

20. Are incumbents eligible to submit bid?

Any small business eligible under SIC code 8744 may submit an offer.

21. RFP references July 1998 Wage Determination. Effective June 1, 1999, a new Wage Determination has been released with an increased health and welfare benefit. Since this is a DOL mandate, will the RFP be modified?

See the answer to question 6, above.

22. How many search rooms are there in PTO that the contractor will be responsible for?

See section 3.1.4 of the PA.

23. How many mailrooms will the contractor be responsible for? Central file rooms?

Currently there are 7 mailrooms and 13 central file rooms.

24. Will PTO release the potential bidders' list to enable companies to identify potential teaming operations?

The list of attendees at the preproposal conference will be posted on the Web site.

25. Where will work be performed? All buildings? What if PTO relocates?

Currently, the contractor performs work in nine of the buildings occupied by the PTO. This number may change at any time as necessary to support PTO's requirements. If PTO relocates, the contractor will continue to provide the required services in the new space.

26. Who are current incumbent(s) if any (company and contract number)? Are they eligible to bid on current contract?

Information on the incumbent contractors is provided in the PA. See the answer to question 20 regarding eligibility.

27. Regarding the scanning function in OIPE:

- Please elaborate on copied, drilled, and re-assembled.
- Scanners—are they PTO supplied?
- Servers—are they maintained by PTO or by contractor; and if by contractor, this contractor or some other?

After the scanning of appropriate documents, the contractor is required to make a copy of the drawings. The application documents must have holes “drilled” and are then reassembled and inserted in the application file. See Government Furnished Equipment (GFE) list provided as Attachment C to the PA and the answer to question 15.

28. In the PCT File Room:

- What is an Article 20 folder?
- The PCT National, International, and Article 20 folders: Are they scanned/bar coded? Any other kind of recordkeeping?

See the answer to question 13 for a discussion of Article 20 folders. All application folders are barcoded and recorded in the PALM system. Information on Article 20 folders is maintained by the contractor in a stand-alone database.

29. When file is received, are they searched for completeness of documents?

The PTO is unsure as to the nature of this question.

30. Are copiers for photocopying PTO supplied?

See the PA for information on GFE.

31. Do you use PALM system to key out the documents?

When moved to a different location, all application files are charged in and out using the PALM system.

32. Is maintaining the network in scanning area within the scope of this contract?

See the answer to question 15, above.

33. Is the incumbent contractor eligible for this 8744 SIC \$20 mil size standard?

See the answer to question 20, above.

34. What does “Did you wand the cases” mean?

“Wand a case” is PTO vernacular for using a bar code reader to change/update PALM information.

35. In a search room, white [label] is USA, pink [label] is foreign--what is blue [label]?

A blue shoe case label indicates NPL (see Attachment A to the PA).

36. Have the incumbent’s employees worked on this PTOSS before their award?

Yes, some of the current contractor’s employees worked on the previous contract.

37. Is the project agreement submitted on July 13, 1999, or will the response to the questions move this date? The answers are scheduled for June 30, 1999.

The deadline for submitting a response to the PA remains July 13, 1999.

38. How many employees does incumbent have on the current contract for PTOSS?

See the answer to question 17, above.

39. Does expansion mean add-on of additional cases or adding a “shoe box” for a given case?

See the current contract on the Web site, especially sections C.3.3 and C.7.3.1.

40. If this is a multiple award, will the process determine which part of the process is awarded or will the parts be coordinated by the winning contractors as a team effort?

This has not yet been determined.

41. Are the cases serialized during the scanning process? If not, will this be done by an incumbent contractor?

Refer to the document preparation instruction document on the Web site.

42. Is the server in CP2—6C22A facilitated by an IT contractor or a PTO employee?

See the answer to question 15, above.

43. What is the relationship of the term “art work” and a search room?

Refer to the definitions on the Web site.

44. On the tour, we were told that records are “QA’d” in the scanning room. How is the QA process performed and who performs it? Is this QA function within the scope of this procurement? What QA metrics are collected and how are they reported?

Refer to the current scanning contract on the Web site.

45. Is server maintenance required to support scanning room?

See the answer to question 15, above.

46. To what extent is OCR of scanned documents implemented?

Currently, there is limited OCR of scanned documents; this may be expanded in the future.

47. To what extent is document preparation implemented to prepare a document for scanning?

Refer to the document preparation instruction document and the current scanning contract on the Web site.

48. Please provide an estimate of the number of incumbent employees who work in each of the six areas we visited on the tour. Are there any other locations in which incumbent employees work? If so, where and how many?

See the answer to questions 17 and 25, above.

49. Who moves files from place-to-place? How? Is this included in contract?

Responsibility for moving files depends on the function in process. Refer to PA requirements and the current contract document on the Web site for additional information.

50. What is the status of automation on other PTO contracts; e.g., PRC, Lockheed Martin, CSC, etc.? How will they affect this contract if automation progresses?

Refer to the PTO Information Technology Plan located at the USPTO Web site. As stated in paragraph 3.15 of the PA, advances in automation will be addressed as they occur.

51. Will you give out the prospective bidders or preproposal conference attendees?

See the answer to question 24, above.

52. Will the bidders' list be posted at the Website?

See the answer to question 24, above.

53. Will you provide (GFE) equipment for new employee training?

No additional equipment will be provided for training. However, PTO will familiarize the contractor on all GFE.

54. The RFP states that PTO can make multiple awards. Can it be bid that way?

See the answer to question 40, above. Offerors are reminded that in order to be responsive to this PA all requested information must be provided.

55. [In the OIPE Scanning operation] we were shown a “server room” where the scanning process is monitored. Who performs this monitoring? Is this a function to be performed under this contract? If so, approximately how many personnel are involved?

See the answer to question 15, above.

56. Is this new requirement? If so, is it a bundling of existing work done by Federal employees? If not, who is the incumbent?

None of the requirements that are described in the PA are “new.” However, we have consolidated the scanning requirement with the other requirements. This is not a bundling of existing work done by Federal employees. For information on the incumbents, see the PA.

57. How does this requirement affect Reed Technologies contract which I understand provides processing of patent applications and related papers?

The two requirements are not related.

58. Why small business and not 8(a)?

It has been determined that the requirements of this PA can best be met by a small business. 8(a) contractors are not precluded from submitting an offer.

59. Can a multi-tasking contract be used more than once to account for several projects? (i.e. Each project was tasked separately under an open-ended contract.)

The PTOSS team does not understand this question. However, offerors are to propose a total contractual solution for accomplishing the requirements of the PA.

60. Will the government allow overtime rates as an incentive for contract employees to longer than 8 hours, especially when an unexpected, much larger than predicted, volume of documents are to be processed? A good example would be during cut-off periods such as month-end processing when counts are to be reported to upper management.

See the answer to question 59, above.

61. The Government has provided as Attachment C a Table that shows which areas of the SOW will require Government Provide Equipment, Government Provided Supplies, Contractor Provided Equipment and Contractor Provided Supplies. However, there are no specifics provided as to quantity or type of items required, nor any delineation between Government versus contractor provided. Therefore, it is requested that the Government provide a GFE list, as well as a list of supplies the Government will continue to furnish for each SOW task. In order for the contract to satisfy the requirement in the last paragraph of Step 2, Section C.

Page 25 of the PA contains a list of Government Furnished Equipment. Page 31 of the PA identifies who will provide equipment/supplies by function. These lists are provided for informational purposes only. It is up to each offeror to determine how best to utilize this information.

62. Section 3.1.8 of the SOW provides for Misc. Processing. Attachment B provides estimated quantities for this function, however, it is unclear from the RFP what type of processing may be required for these documents.

This is not germane to responding to the PA.

63. Section 3.5 of the SOW provides for File Room Maintenance, however the turn-around time for each subfactor is listed as “will vary by function.” Although quantity is listed in Attachment B, proposed contractor staffing and price will be greatly affected by the required turn-around time. Therefore, it is requested that the Government provide a standard turn-around time for proposal preparation.

Refer to Maintenance of Application File Storage Areas in the current File Maintenance SOW provided on the PTOSS webpage. This information will be helpful in preparing your response.

64. Section 3.6.1 of the SOW provides for 2-day turn-around for non-fee mail and 3 day turn-around for fee mail. Are these time frames correct, or have they been reversed? Further, what is the timeframe for new applications?

Section 3.6.1 is correct as stated. See Section 3.6.3 for turnaround time applicable to new applications.

65. Attachment C of the PA shows shared responsibilities (government & contractor) for supplies in Final Processing (Ref. 3.1.1.3) Can you elaborate on this?

See the answer to question 61, above.

66. Under Section D (Cost Estimate) of the Step 2 process description, it reads “Total length for all cost estimates together may not exceed ten (10) pages, excluding the proposed schedule of services. Please define the proposed schedule of services.

An example of a schedule of services is provided in Section B of the current File Maintenance contract found on the PTOSS reference library.

67. Please identify all Government-Furnished Equipment and supplies for each of the Functions in the Statement of Work.

See the answer to question 62, above.

68. Section 9, Step 10 requests proposals be submitted in MS Word 7.0. Is this MS Word 97?

There is no such thing as MS Word 97. However, MS Word 7.0 is contained in MS Office 97.

69. Based on your response to question 1 in the initial Q&A, does the page assignment provided in Section 9, Step 2, Paragraph A. apply to each team member as well? In other words, will the offeror be afforded one page per contract for each of the five contracts required per team member (5 times the number of team members), or will the offeror be limited to a maximum of five pages?

The Capability Statement may be no longer than 15 pages in length no matter what teaming arrangements are proposed.

70. Section 9, Step 10 requests proposals be submitted on a 3.5” HD floppy diskette, formatted for IBM compatibility. Assume that the request is for type and form of diskette, not number. Is this correct?

Yes.